Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I

appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, I take to the floor today, not as a Democrat or a

Republican, but as an Iraq war veteran who was a captain of the 82nd

Airborne Division in Baghdad.

I speak with a heavy heart for my fellow paratrooper Specialist Chad

Keith, Specialist James Lambert and the 17 other brave men I served

with who never made it home.

I rise to give voice to hundreds of thousands of patriotic

Pennsylvanians and veterans across the globe who are deeply troubled by

the President's call to escalate the number of American troops in Iraq.

I served in Baghdad from June of 2003 to January of 2004. Walking in

my own combat boots, I saw firsthand this administration's failed

policy in Iraq. I led convoys up and down Ambush Alley in a Humvee

without doors, convoys that Americans still run today because too many

Iraqis are still sitting on the sidelines.

I served in al-Rashid, Baghdad, which, like Philadelphia, is home to

1.5 million people. While there are 7,000 Philadelphia police officers

serving, like my father in Philadelphia, protecting its citizens, there

were only 3,500 of us in al-Rashid, Baghdad.

Mr. Speaker, the time for more troops was 4 years ago, but this

President ignored military experts like General Shinseki and General

Zinni, who, in 2003, called for several hundred thousand troops to

secure Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, our President, again, is ignoring military leaders,

patriots like General Colin Powell, like General Abizaid and members of

the bipartisan Iraq Study Group who oppose this escalation.

But most importantly, Congresses in the past did not stand up to the

President and his policies. But today I stand with my other military

veterans, some who were just elected, like Sergeant Major Tim Walz,

Admiral Joe Sestak and Commander Chris Carney. We stand together to

tell this administration that we are against this escalation, and that

Congress will no longer give the President a blank check.

Mr. Speaker, close to my heart is a small park on the corner of 24th

and Aspen Streets in Philadelphia. This is the Patrick Ward Memorial

Park. Patrick Ward was a door gunner in the U.S. Army during Vietnam.

He was killed serving the country that he loved. He was the type of guy

that neighborhoods devote street corners to and parents name their

children after him, including my parents, Marge and Jack Murphy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you, how many more street corner memorials are we

going to have for this war? This is what the President's proposal does.

It sends more of our best and bravest to die refereeing a civil war.

Just a month ago, Sergeant Jae Moon from my district in Levittown,

Bucks County, was killed in Iraq.

You know, a few blocks away from this great Chamber, when you walk in

the snow, is the Vietnam Memorial, where half the soldiers listed on

that wall died after America's leaders knew our strategy would not

work. It was immoral then, and it would be immoral now to engage in the

same delusion. That is why sending more troops in the civil war is the

wrong strategy.

We need to win the war on terror, and reasonable people may disagree

on what to do, but most will agree that it is immoral to send young

Americans to fight and die in a conflict without a real strategy for

success. The President's current course is not resolute, it is

reckless. That is why I will vote to send a message to our President

that staying the course is no longer an option.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for a new direction in Iraq. From my time

serving with the 82nd Airborne Division in Iraq, it became clear that

in order to succeed there, you must tell the Iraqis that we will not be

there forever. Yet, 3 years now since I have been home, it is still

Americans leading convoys up and down Ambush Alley and securing Iraqi

street corners. We must make the Iraqis stand up for Iraq and set a

timeline to start bringing our heroes home.

That is why I am proud to be an original cosponsor, with Senator

Barack Obama and fellow paratrooper, Congressman Mike Thompson, of the

Iraq De-escalation Act, a moderate and responsible plan to start

bringing our troops home, mandating a surge in diplomacy and refocusing

our efforts on the war on terror and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, our country needs a real plan to get our troops out of

Iraq, to protect our homeland and to secure and refocus our efforts on

capturing and killing Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. There are over

130,000 American servicemen and women serving bravely in Iraq.

Unfortunately, thousands more are on the way. An open-ended strategy

that ends in more faceless roadside bombs in Baghdad and more street-

corner memorials in America is not one that I will support.